

The Distance between Us

by Takatsu

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Summary: Yamaguchi Tadashi was a normal boy with a plain face with a boring life, or so that's what he thinks. In contrast, Tsukishima Kei just screams a striking aura-a tall stature, a provoking stare, and a life full of threats from those who get irked by his icy expression. With such a distance between their lives, will they be able to connect at some point?

1. Chapter 1: Distance

**I could not thank you guys enough for the support you've given to my two Haikyuu fics, "Invincible" and "Order Made". If not for you, I would not have been inspired to write another fic. Now that "Order Made" is down to its last two chapters, I have decided to pursue a new pairing.**

**Yes. It's the TsukiYama pairing.**

**I hope you will be able to like it as much as you did for my two previous fics.**

**Once again, thank you!**

~Takatsu

* * *

><p>Chapter 1: Distance

From afar.

That is how I always watch him.

From behind.

That is where I always choose to stand. Just behind him. Never going

ahead. Always trailing his footsteps.

No. It's not that I couldn't bear to see his face. More like it gives me a weird feeling. And even if I do face him, there is no way I could look him in the eye.

Apart from the horizontal one, there is this vertical distance between us.

I was a normal hundred seventy nine and a half centimeters. He was a hundred eighty eight and a third centimeters.

Quite the difference, I know. So even if I gather the courage to stand before him and speak myself, I would just be gazing up, with him looking down at me. And then I have to wear the weight of his gaze. I think I would rather face my mother, who was a lot smaller than me. Wait. Maybe that was not a good decision. She had the most frightening scream when she's mad "e-eh?

How on earth was able to know his height?

U-Uhm, does that really matter? Eh! No! I am no stalker! Just that

Just that

Just

That

I really look up to him.

And ever since that day, I felt.

I wanted to know who he was.

His name. What he hates. What he loves.

Those trivial stuff.

I know. I could have asked him, then it wouldn't have made things this worse.

Here I am, standing behind a bookshelf, watching him amidst the spaces of two voluminous books. I know. I am pathetic.

Then again, maybe it wasn't just about the physical distance.

When I see him turn the pages of those book with a cold expression, his usual headphones stuck on his ear

I realized.

It wasn't only about our heights and our stature.

For some reason, it was as if a barrier stood between us. Some wall.

And he was the one who built it.

Not only to me, but to all the people around him.

Judging that, I knew I was a hopeless case.

Closing the book I pretended to be reading, I returned it to its shelf and walked away with a heavy sensation in my heart.

This is really turning bad for you, Tadashi.

"Oi."

Eh.

That voiceâ€|

Where did it come frâ€"

I turned around to face a looming figure.

Yellow hair. Condescending eyes. An expression cold as ice.

"You dropped this."

I stuttered. I opened my mouth, struggling to get out the words. Only a stupid sound came out. It sounded like some toad whose throat had just been stabbed.

I knew. I can see it. It's clearly written on his face.

I looked stupid.

He held out the handkerchief to me.

"T-Thanksâ€|" I finally managed to mumble.

"Whatever," he said in nonchalant tone, taking his exit.

Maybe it wasn't really that bad, Tadashi.

For a moment.

I was able to stand before him.

Just in front of him.

For the first time, I felt the distance close in.

* * *

><p>A.N. Tell me what you guys think! I would be looking forward to your reviews and comments! :) *zooms away*

2. Chapter 2: One Step Forward

****Chapter: One Step Forward****

No. You see, there was really nothing extraordinary about me. Whenever I face the mirror, I couldn't have cared less how I looked. Even my siblings have noted how I plain looked. Almost everybody had

black hair. Had black pupils for their eyes. I wasn't even one to be included in the honor list. My mother once noted that it was a talent. To not stand out for a single thing. Even thugs have their own strong points.

My point is, it's just tiring. Trying to be something. Well, if you did become someone, and people began to attach you to that thing you were known for, wouldn't you be pressured to keep it up if it's on the positive side, then break it if it's on the negative side?

It might be safe to say that yep. I like my ordinary life. No hassles. No sudden twists and turns.

Butâ€|

The cold brown eyes flashed before my mind.

"_You dropped this."_

That guy.

HE JUST DESTROYED IT.

I banged my head against the wall.

"Oniichan! You're so loud!" a tiny voice came out from the other room.

"I-I'm sorry!" I stuttered, fixing my dress. I massaged my head. What the hell was wrong with me? I'm acting like a high school girl in love?

Wait.

In love?

"No way, Tadashi," I shuddered at the thought.

Yes. All I did was try to find out his name. And then the section he was in. The place where he hangs out most often (which was the library).

My face darkened as I realized how much I had been acting like a real deal stalker.

But how do I even confront him?

I justâ€|just really wanted to thank him for that day. Wait, does he even remember me? Judging from the way he eyed me like I was some sort of trash who blocked his way, he didn't.

Come to think of it, would it be even possible to talk to him? Unlike him, he looked striking enough to make every student's head turn to him. He was one of thoseâ€"people with an overwhelming aura. As ifâ€|you can't just mess with him.

And he was always alone.

I slapped both of my cheeks as I stared at my own self in the mirror. Ahâ€|there goes my freckles again.

"_Oniichan, it's your only charm point after all! Those freckles!_"
My younger sister's laughter echoed like a witchlike cackle inside my head. Hmp.

I picked my bag and went out of my room. Soon, I was on my way to school. Whatever. I'm gonna get this over once break comes. I'll storm inside the library, thank him, then leave.

Then again, why on earth was I getting so flustered about this?

Oh well, he saved me from those bullies after all. That was the very first time I got picked on. All my life, I was pretty sure that I was a chameleon. I literally had a very small presence.

Until that day, when by some mistake, I stepped on the foot of this really huge guy.

The clock struck twelve.

"â€| "

"â€| "

I laughed nervously. Come on. Just one word.

He gave me the exact look he did yesterday.

"U-Uhmâ€| "

He hissed.

"If you're not gonna say anything, then just go away. You're disturbing my reading."

"I just wanted to thank you for saving me that day!"

"That day?" He put down the book he was reading.

"W-When you saved me from that huge guy. He almost knocked me to the ground."

"Oh. "

Looks like he remembers.

"Did that even happen?"

Okay, he doesn't remember after all.

I gave another nervous laugh.

"T-Then, thank you for picking up my handkerchief for me. "

"Oh. "

There was another round of silence.

"Did that even happen?"

Either this guy has zero memory storage, or he was just faking it.

"Who are you anyway?"

I was about to explain myself clear when I spotted the cover of the book he was reading.

`_**Flying High: A Guide to Volleyball Training**_`

"Do you like volleyball?" I said, trying to hide my excitement.

"So what if I do?" He said nonchalantly.

"I played it too! Back in middle school!"

His glare was enough to tell me that he just doesn't care.

"How about you?"

"I played for a bit. Now go away and please never approach me again."

It was then that my eyes caught sight of his watch. I screamed.

"O-Oi, what now?" He scowled.

"T-T-T-Thatâ€|" I said, my hands shaking as I pointed a finger at the ornament.

"Like I said, what?"

"THAT'S THE LIMITED EDITION VERSION OF THE SUPER MARIO COLLECTION! I hear that it's one of the first wristwatch collectibles released by Nintendo!"

"Y-You play Super Mario?"

"Of course! And come on, who doesn't know it? In fact, I'm rather surprised that a `_scary_`-looking guy like you is intoâ€|"ah."

It seems like I said the taboo word.

Good job Tadashi. You just called him 'scary'.

Just was when I thought he was gonna tell me to shut up, he turned his head away, a red tinge forming at the tip of his ears.

Was he possiblyâ€|"

"So what if I'm into Super Marioâ€|"

THIS GUY CAN BLUSH?!

And so that's how I and the guy by the name of Tsukishima Kei had our first conversation.

3. Chapter 3: Fleeting

**Shoutout to the people have followed and reviewed this fic so far! Yep, yep, we have a shortage of Tsukiyama fics! (No, not Tsukiyama the pervy stalker ghoul! .)**

* * *

><p>Chapter 3:
Fleeting

"Yamaguchiâ€| "

"Mmâ€| "

"Yamaguchiâ€| "

"Oi, Yamaguchi!"

I blinked. Once. Twice. Thrice. I was so sure that the ball had hit the area just inside the line, and I was pretty sure that the people were cheering and chanting my name. Yep. In my dream, I seemed to be an ace of some team. It was the best dream that I've ever had in my ages, but now, thanks to this classmate of mine, it looks like I'll never have this dream again.

I finally opened my eyes.

"Keisuke, I sure hope you just realized what you just did. I was about to score the match point for my team, and you just ruined it," I said, half-glaring at my seatmate and friend for years.

"In your dreams. Tadashi, you're pretty much the downright definition of boring."

"Oi!"

"Kidding," he said with a chuckle. "Maa, but is it true? You talked with the Ice King?"

"Ice King?" Huh? Did we have some sort of figure skating celebrity here at Karasuno?

"Gah, you don't know the Ice King? Seriously, just how boring are you, Yamaguchi Tadashi?"

"Well sorry for not knowing. If you could just explain it to me rightaway, I'd appreciate it."

"Tsukishima Kei! That glasses guy with a blonde hair, icy eyes that will make you cower in fear once you meet them, and an aura that warns you not to ever mess up with him!" he said in a hushed voice.

I frowned. "I seeâ€| "

"That guy is dangerous, I'm serious Tadashi. I heard that he got into some brawl with some seniors, and they were beat up pretty bad! And they said he even glared at some girls when he got some drink in front the vending machine!"

"Hmâ€|but aren't some seniors here justâ€|really stingy? I mean, I couldn't see him as the one who picks up the fight. Plusâ€|maybe the girls were ogling too much at him, he felt his privacy being threatenedâ€""

I stopped. Keisuke was giving me a look that seemed to question whether my brain was still working fine.

"Uhm, Keisukeâ€""

"Are you defending him?" He said in disbelief.

"What I'm saying isâ€|we shouldn't judge him right away," I said, crossing my arms over the table and burying my head on it. "It's unfair."

"Whatever Tadashi. Don't tell me I didn't warn you."

"Hmâ€|" I merely grunted in response.

"You really look tired."

"â€|"

"What did you even do last night?"

I buried my face even further on my arms, pretending that I have fallen asleep.

There was no way I could tell my friend that I had stayed up all night searching for some volleyball books.

* * *

><p>It was pretty much an ordinary day. Clubs recruiters have appeared like mushroom on the hallways when break struck. The bulletin boards have also began to blossom with colourful and catchy posters. Some guy even stopped me on my tracks but said sorry as soon as he saw my whole face. Did I really look that lame?<p>

I sighed. Oh well. Not that these clubs concern me.

After all, there was only one club in my mind.

And that isâ€"

"I-I-I w-want to s-s-sign up for your club!" I said with a voice that I knew sounded pathetic. I was really stuttering, and was worse, I felt some stares lock at me.

The short-haired girl with glasses simply nodded and handed a paper.

"Please write your name, section, and signature."

"H-Hai!"

I gulped, staring at the paper in front of me. With shaking hands, I tried to write my name as legibly as possible. I then noticed that

two names have signed up before me. They were also freshmen like me.

"Kageyama Tobio" "Hinata Shouyou" The second one was written in big, bold letters, as if he wanted the whole world to know that he was signing up for the volleyball club. He might even love the sport more than I do.

A roaring laughter.

That was the first thing that Keisuke did when he found out that I signed up for the volleyball club.

"Are you serious Tadashi? Will you be even able to handle it?" he said, trying to catch his breath from too much laughing. I felt something surge in my chest. Ah yes. This might be the first time that I felt like I wanted to punch someone. Nevertheless, I managed to pull a smile.

"So? What's so wrong about it?" I said, unable to hide the annoyance in my voice.

"Nothing" "it's just that" "that really caught me off guard. I never even knew you played the sport!"

"Sorry for ruining your expectations then. And sorry for loving something you did not expect in the least."

"Maa, maa, don't be mad now Tadashi. My bad, my bad," he said, patting my shoulder. I heaved a deep sigh. Taking him seriously would just do me no good.

"Well, I wish you luck, Tadashi." Whether it was a mockery or a sincere message, I just tried not to think about it. I pulled another smile and said the set of words that I've used all my life.

"It's fine."

And with that, I opened my book, acting as if nothing ever happened.

* * *

><p>My bad mood must have been pretty obvious. I somehow ended up almost slamming a book over the table. We were given a homework on history, and since we were dismissed ten minutes earlier than time, I figured out that I would have the time to do some library work.<p>

"Oh" "someone's in a bad mood."

Yes, I am.

I was really in a bad mood.

I even failed to notice the presence of the so-called Ice King, and the fact that I have just pulled out a chair in front of the table where he usually was.

"Ah."

He smirked.

"I guess even Mary Sues could get irked huh?"

"I'm not a Mary Sue, and besides, I'm not mad."

"Huh," he mused without tearing his eyes away from the book I was reading. "It's written all over your face."

"Ahahahaha" I laughed weakly. "I see. Sorry if it bothered you."

"Who told you I was bothered by it?"

I bit my lips. It might be better to remain silent and just do my homework. I heaved another sigh of the day. It was my way of calming myself.

And pulling a smile.

"I-I'm shutting up now," I said, picking up my pen and opening the book.

"So tell me what happened."

"Eh?"

"Tell me what happened."

I gulped. "Nothing happened."

It was his turn to sigh. Unlike mine, it was a sigh that showed that he was getting annoyed. He finally tore his eyes away from the book he was reading, and stared at me with those icy eyes.

"So you're really a Mary Sue huh. The type who says they're fine as hell when in fact that wanted to punch a wall to get it out."

"Like I said"

"Those type of people"

"Annoy me the most" Those words, coupled with his condescending glare, just made me gulp. He really was annoyed.

I put down my pen.

"It's just that there's this friend of mine who seems to be mocking me."

"Oh"

"Well not that I could blame me. You see, I look plain right? I look like there's nothing special about me."

"Hm" Whether that an assent or just a mere response, I had no idea. Nevertheless, I continued.

"I told him that I signed up for the volleyball club, and he

laughed."

"I see."

I could feel my hands getting sweaty. Ah, how could I ever resolve my problem with nerves? Does my problem sound lame in itself? I never should have told him.

"Just punch him."

"P-Pardon?"

"Punch him. It's the quickest way to send the message. Or sass him. Like saying, 'Oh, at least I'm not a loser like you who doesn't even dream about anything.' Something like that."

Pffft.

Before I even realized, I was laughing.

He frowned. "What's so funny?"

I clutched my stomach to control my fits of laughter.

"Nothing, it's just that...well, your advice certainly got me off guard," I said, wiping the tears from my eyes.

"Bastard!" He hissed.

"But you're right. I really should start being honest with him."

"So you'll punch him in the face?"

"No way could I do that! He's my friend!"

"Friends support people, not mock them...at least that's what I learned from society."

I grinned. "Indeed. You're right."

"Thanks," I said, picking up my pen once again and setting my eyes back on the text I had been reading.

"Whatever!" he said in his usual nonchalant tone.

I told you Keisuke. This guys is not as bad as you think. He saved me from those bullies...huh?

Weird.

Somehow, I felt like a burden had left my chest.

"Aren't you joining?"

"Huh?"

"The volleyball club."

"No. Not interested."

"Eh?" I said, somewhat taken aback. "But you said you did play a bit."

"That was ages ago."

"But you could always joinâ€"

"Look, can you just shut up? I'm trying to read a book here, and besidesâ€"

"I promised not to even play that sport anymore."

I opened my mouth, but before I could even ask the question, he was already on his feet. He snatched his bag and made a slight bow.

And just like that, the Ice King made his exit, leaving me with a half-puzzled, half-taken aback expression.

Oh well.

He does have an icy personality after all.

But still, it somehow bugged me. Or maybe it was just my imagination.

When he said that he would never play volleyball again, I saw some pain in his eyes.

Ah. This situation is no different from my dream.

Just when you think you got or understood something, it escapes from your fingers. Just like that. And I even planned to lend him some of my volleyball books.

"Just get this homework done, Tadashiâ€|" I muttered to myself as I wrote from where I left off.

4. Chapter 4: Satellite

****Chapter Four: Satellite****

* * *

><p>He hardly hears the voice of his mother when he enters the room.<p>

It was always the same. Always. The same view. The same scenario. He walks past the same set of flower vase and sofa, the same sofa, the same walls, the same paintings that hung up on the wall.

The same sickening white that exploded around the house. He had really no idea why his parents loved that color so much. They say it just made the house all the more pure.

But to him, it only added to the emptiness. As that certain person said, it made their house look like a hospital. That's why one day, when they were kinds, they just decided to spray some paint and mark the walls with hand prints. Their mother screamed at them like hell. They didn't care. That day, the house became a beautiful explosion of

colors. And man, how they felt free.

His eyes rested on the wooden table. Ah. When the hell will they decide to change it?

Even the number of seats remained the same.

Ah.

How sickening, he mutters to himself as he climbed the same set of stairs that now felt so small.

* * *

><p>The freckled boy ruffled his hair as he tried to finish the third homework of the day. It was nine, and he hadn't figured out the fourth problem. Well, he thinks he'd rather have this equation than the mystery by the name of Tsukishima Kei.<p>

Then again, why was he getting worked up all over it? It was his fault in the first place. He thought he finally found a friend—or at least—an acquaintance out of the blonde lad, given their shared 'interests' over Super Mario and volleyball.

"Ah—what a pain—" he mutters to himself as he buried his face on his own arms.

He just couldn't forget the look in his golden eyes when he said that he won't play it anymore.

That guy is dangerous.

Racing his head, the lad's eyes rested on the scene outside his window. The sky wasn't in its usual blue and black. What stretched out instead was an expanse of infinite grey.

It looks like it was going to rain tonight.

"_Friends support people, not mock them—at least that's what I learned from society."_

The lad's eyes widened as he saw a dent of light cut across the clouds.

Little by little, the clouds moved to the side, like knights giving way to a beautiful monarch.

It was the moon.

Before he knew it, Yamaguchi Tadashi was just smiling to himself.

* * *

><p>"Huh?"<p>

A raise of an eyebrow. Cold stare. A haughty click of the head. Another book in his hands. And perhaps, he had listened to the hundredth song of the day.

It felt strange, to feel relieved in seeing the same scene.

The same view.

The same person.

Tsukishima Kei was in his usual seat, in front of the usual table.

And I was going to talk to him, like usual.

"Tsukishima-kun." The name felt foreign against my lips. It was my first time to utter his name after all. Come to think of it, we hadn't really spoken each other's names since we met.

"Like I saidâ€¦I wanted to apologize. For yesterday. I seem to have hit your nerve."

"Weren't you always hitting on my nerves?"

"â€¦"

Tsukishima sighed. "I'm not really mad or anything. You're just too pushy."

"You're annoyed after all!"

"Well who wouldn't be?! You're like a dog snooping his master around!"

"E-Eh? No way!"

"Yeah, if I am some planet you'd be that sort of satellite I'd want to ditch."

"But aren't you the satellite?"

He gave me a look that seemed to ponder whether I have gone mad or something.

"There's _Tsuki_ in your name. And the moon looks cold. Like you."

"Haâ€¦"

"And the moon is a satellite."

"Are you some frustrated poet?"

I found myself chuckling as I took my seat. "Maybe."

He covered his face with his palm. "I wonder if I should stop going to this library. It's time to find a new hideout."

"Eh?!" Panic began to spread in my chest.

"Yeah I think I would."

"Please don't _Tsukki_!" I choked.

"Yes I wilâ€¦wait. What. What did you just call

me?"

"_Tsukki_."

"No."

"_Tsukki_," I repeated, not batting an eye.

"Youâ€|" He hissed.

And then I was laughing for real.

"Don't tell me you're embarrassed, _Tsukki_â€|"

The next thing I knew, he was looking at me with a stare that could only mean murder.

"F-Fine! I'll stop! I'll stop!"

"Good," he breathed out. He then swiped a finger over his phone. He must have set the volume at maximum level.

"That's why people are scared of you, _Tsukki_."

The last thing I heard was the slam of a book.

"I heard that one."

I dodged my head just in time to avoid a flying book.

* * *

><p>A.N.: *random* I was listening to Ed Sheeran's "All of the Stars" when I wrote this. :)

5. Chapter 5: Confrontation

****Chapter 5: Confrontation****

I've always thought that my life was something stagnant. A life filled with the same thingâ€"events that happen again and again. But then again, maybe something that something that repeats itself over and over again isn't so bad.

These conversations with the lad in front of me.

They weren't so bad.

In fact, I always found myself laughing. Sometimes, I would taunt him just to make him flustered. There was just something in the way he knows his eyebrows and glare at me. No. Please. I am not masochistic! How should I say this.

It makes you see beyond him.

That his image doesn't end with the icy persona that he was cast into.

It was the fact that he could also be like other people. He can get

annoyed.

Or to be more precise, he wasn't someone who had completely shut himself from the world. So whenever I talk to him, I feel like somehow, I could reach out to him. As if for some moment, there wasn't a wall that stood between us.

"You sure love readingâ€|" I mused, crossing my arms over the table like I usually do. Most of the time, I just find myself watching him, the way his golden orbs move from left to right as he finish another line of text, the way he somehow frownsâ€"perhaps when he found something funny or queer over the story or article. Even his habits have made a mark on meâ€"the way he flicks and twists the pen he was holding, the way he massages the back of his neck when he feels like he's had the same posture for too long, the way heâ€"

"And you sure love staring at me huh," he said without even looking at me.

His words struck like lighting, making all of the thoughts scattered all over my brain. I opened my mouth to string some logical reply.

"Hehâ€|" That was it. His signature smirk. I cast my eyes on the book I was reading (yes, I did drop to read butâ€|)

"Did you even read those books that I lent you?" I managed to ask, trying to shake off the warmth that almost spread across my face.

"No."

My eyes shot like a dart to stare indignantly at him.

"Chill. I did."

My eyes lit up in an instant.

"Really?" There was no way I could hide my excitement in my voice.

"Yeah I did. Happy?"

I found myself grinning.

"Wipe it out. It's creepy."

"They're great right? Especially their guides on hand movements. Easy to follow and very reader friendly."

"Hm."

"I could lend you more!"

"No thanks."

"Hmpâ€|" I snorted as I tried to bring my focus back to my task. I clicked the pencil I was using, only to find out that it had run out of graphite. Placing one hand over the table, I let my free hand rummage through my bag.

"Oi."

"Huh?" I said, my eyes still searching for the case where I place my school things.

"Your hand."

"My hand?"

"What happened to your hand?"

"Eh—|" I said absentmindedly, still focused on my search.

Until I felt a foreign warmth.

I flinched as I realized that he had just placed his fingers over own hand.

"It's full of bruises."

I blinked.

Oh.

Right.

Casting my eyes once again on the table, I withdrew my hand at once, making sure to hide it completely from that piercing stare.

"It's nothing. I was just practising my receives."

"Oh, rather dedicated aren't you—" He said in his usual mocking tone. "I bet you'd gladly beat yourself up just to be a regular."

"It's none of your business!"

The other students had all craned their necks at me. At that instant, I felt all eyes on me. I gulped, feeling a strange chill spread across my body.

I just yelled.

Not just at anybody.

But at the infamous Ice King.

He looked taken aback himself.

Well, it's not only him. In fact, I had no idea what made me even raise my voice that much.

"Oi you! This is a library! This is a place for books, not brawls!"

"I-I'm sorry!" I answered with the utmost regret. I bowed again and again.

Which leaves me to this lad.

Unable to meet his eyes, nevertheless, I chose to at least give him a bow and an apology that only I could have heard.

Grabbing my things in haste, I snatched my bag and left the place without even looking back.

* * *

><p>The lad by the name of Tsukishima Kei sighed. He'd lie if he's day that how the boy acted did not give him the slightest surprise. But oddly, he felt satisfied. Not for him, but for the boy. Oh right. He hadn't got the slightest idea who that freckled boy was. All he knows is that he reminded him of a puppy that just happened to follow him to this haven of his.<p>

Well at least, he did get to see him flustered.

Not the usual smiling him, but someone who could be honest enough to his feelings.

"_If you're happy, smile. Laugh. If you're sad, cry it out. And if you're mad, scream and let the world know." _That was all.

Well, if he could only be that honest to that friend who mocked his volleyball skills, it would make it all the more satisfying.

His eyes fell to the floor.

Not again.

Tsukishima crouched down and picked up the lad's handkerchief.

* * *

><p>I wanted to punch myself. What just happened?!<p>

"Just what on earth has gotten into you?!" I muttered to myself as I stared at that lame face. I've really done it. I just yelled at him. And we were not even friends. In fact, I pretty much forced myself into him.

I heaved out a deep sigh, slapping my palm across my face.

"Tadashi? What's the matter?"

I looked back to see a puzzled Keisuke.

"Keisukeâ€|" I muttered. Of all times, why did someone have to be here. I should have ran straight to the rooftop. Some secluded place. Oh well.

"What's the matter? You look downâ€|" He said, eyeing my crestfallen face.

"Iâ€|" "

"Aha! I know, you got criticized by your senpais, right?" He said, breaking an amused smile.

Eh.

"Noâ€" "

"Don't lie to me! We've been friends for years! I know just how weak you are!" He said, chuckling as he slapped my back. I almost choked at the force. This guyâ€"

"So you didn't make it huh? I told youâ€|it's just too much for you. Come on, just give up Tadashi!"

What are you even sayingâ€|

"I mean, you were really clumsy when we were kids. Remember? I always had to help you get up whenever you stumble. You just mess up even in the most casual situation!"

I see, so that's how you see me.

"And woahâ€|look at your handsâ€| "

He was about to touch it when I jerked it away from his reach.

"O-Ohâ€|you sure you're okay Tadashi?"

Do I look like I'm okayâ€|

"Iâ€" "

"Anyways, take my advice. Quit that club for now. I mean, obviouslyâ€"volleyball is too much for you, and the sport's pretty lameâ€" "

"You don't know a thing about me."

Those words.

They just escaped from my lips. How and why, I had no idea. I should have been used to keeping my thoughts to myself. Come to think of it, if there was something I'm really good at, it was my ability to keep my problems to myself. Even at home. It was how I got used to my life. It was how I was able to live my life without any ruckus.

It was how I made myself ordinary, or to use Keisuke's words.

Lame.

"T-Tadashi, are you picking up a fight with me?"

Keisuke's words shot me back to reality.

"N-Noâ€|" I said, scratching my head. "I-I'm sorry, I'm just reallyâ€|stressed. Thinking a lot of thingsâ€| "

I was afraid to look at my friend. I'm sure he looked really furious. I knew just how hot-tempered he could be.

"B-But, please don't call the sport that I love with all my heart as

'lame'â€| " I said, struggling to keep my voice from shaking. I could feel my chest getting hot, making the room where we were feel congesting.

He clicked his tongue. "Whatever. I'm going ahead."

"O-Okayâ€| " I said, fighting back the suffocating sensation as I pulled a smile.

And with that, Keisuke left.

I cringed my teeth.

I had never really done it before, but right now, it felt so right.

I punched the wall with all my might.

* * *

><p>The lad was still hissing to himself. Well, it did surprise him to hear his friend talk back at him like that. He had never really seen him like that.<p>

"Was volleyball really that fun?" He found himself asking to himself.

"You really shouldn't make fun of the things that people love, Keisuke-kun."

The voice cut across his thoughts like an ice.

He looked to his side.

Tsukishima Kei, the Ice King, was leaning against the wall, looking amused, wearing a smirk, his eyes crossed as he surveyed him.

Yes. He was staring at him.

"Y-Youâ€| "

"Oh? You know me? I must say I'm rather flattered. I heard you were spreading rumors about me being some thug shit, but I don't really care. The more famous I am, the better. Butâ€""

Keisuke find himself backing away. His classmates were right.

He was damn tall.

Tsukishima towered over him, and it made him all the more inferior as someone of a smaller stature.

"W-What do you need from me?"

"Oh nothing. I was just thinkingâ€"wellâ€"trying to remember the definition of the word 'friend'. Let' seeâ€| " To his surprise, Tsukishima had withdrawn a thick-spined book from his bag. He then flipped the pages with such speed it was evident that he had memorized its content. His golden eyes gave a small glint as soon as he found the word

"Webster-san says, and I quote, a 'friend' is a person who you like and enjoy being with and a person who helps or supports someone or something. Hmâ€¦interesting." He raised his eyebrows slightly. He then tore his eyes away from the dictionary he was holding to stare at Keisuke, who was now gritting his teeth.

"Strange. I mean all you did back there was mock your friend namedâ€¦hmâ€¦'Tadashi', right?"

"Bastardâ€¦you were listening!"

"Well you see, it somehow got boring and noisy in the library so I decided to take a piss and maybe have a good read inside the cubicle. But lo and behold! All I find are two 'friends' having a tension. So I decided to just walk away."

"And wait for me here?"

"Yeah, cause you seeâ€¦"

The lad broke into a smile that doesn't spell friendly at all.

"You annoy me that much."

The other lad had found himself taking another step backward. He was just too strong. No. It wasn't only his height.

His eyes. His smirk.

He was everything that is dangerous.

"I-It's none of your business!"

Tsukishima laughed. "Fascinating! Your Tadashi also said those words to me when he left me back there. I did mock him. But you know what difference is?"

Tsukishima leaned so as to set his head at an eye level with the cowering Keisuke.

"He was honest to himself when he said that. Now if you think he's just doing fine with what you just did to him, we're gonna have a problem thenâ€¦Keisuke-kunâ€¦" It was like hearing the devil whisper his name itself.

"Nice to meet you, Keisuke-kun!" He chimed as he finally took a step backwards. He then walked away as if nothing happened, chuckling to himself.

Keisuke was sure that he had just wetted his pants.

"K-Keisuke, what happened?!"

"Shut up Tadashi! Since when did you become buddy-buddy with that demon?"

"D-Demon?" I blinked, not having the slightest clue on what he was talking about.

"Tsukishima Kei! The Ice King!" He said.

"E-Eh?"

"Move out the way!" He yelled, pushing me to the side. I could only stare at him with gaping eyes.

Just what did that bespectacled boy do to Keisuke?

6. Chapter 6: Contact

****Chapter 6: Contact****

* * *

><p>I never thought that that day would come.<p>

The day that I would become the center of attention, when every person around would stare at me (and I assume, all of them were gaping right at that moment), when all eyes would be upon me, who was just some lame guy sitting in the very middle of the room. Believe me, I think I've loved the glory days of mediocrity—it guaranteed me a life of peace, a life relatively free of pressure.

But it looks like today, it's gonna be disrupted. (I'm not even saying it will end, god, no.)

The school bell had just sounded its alarm, and I was about to stuff my things in my bag to race my way to the cafeteria (students almost always tend to be monsters when their favorite dishes go at stake). So far, Keisuke hadn't even said a word to me ever since that incident with the Ice King. Well, not that I was really down about it (in fact, I felt pretty much at peace at the fact that he won't bug or irk me about volleyball for now). Oh well, there goes another day in my life—

Or so I thought.

When the bespectacled blonde boy appeared right at the door, I knew that this day would be a different story.

He towered over the other students that it was really impossible for him to be invisible. The headphones merely hung around his neck, and he looked like he was looking for something.

The moment he appeared at the door, the whole class went quiet. It was as if a beast had just entered their realm, and everyone knew that the worst decision was to do something that'd irk him.

Such was the reputation of the lad by the blonde boy, who finally spoke after letting his eyes wander.

"By any chance, is there a freckled boy by the name of Yamaguchi Tadashi here?" His cold voice wasn't really loud. He spoke in a casual tone, yet then again, its icy tone was enough to make my classmates stare at him.

To me.

Stare at him.

Then to me.

"Ahâ€"

His eyes widened for a bit. Was I really that hard to spot? Well then, excuse me for blending in that much.

I forced a smile, enough to ease my classmates.

_T-Tsukki!? _

"Tsukki?!" There was no need for them to say it aloud. Clearly, my classmates were gaping at me in such a way that made me feel like I've suddenly befriended a dragon. Or something close.

"Ah, I came here to return the books that you lent me."

I gave a nervous laugh. At this point, either I'll have to bear the melting stares or I could just escape right now.

I chose the latter.

I gave Keisuke another look. He wouldn't even look at me. Oh well.

I grabbed my stuff, ran towards the door, and took the courage to drag the blonde boy, whose expression remained unchanged despite the action.

* * *

><p>I was panting when we reached the usual table.<p>

"Aren't you going to eat?" He asked as I grabbed the chair, letting myself slump against it.

"Forget lunch. Just tell me what you did to Keisuke."

"Oh? Did he tell you about it?"

"Pretty much."

"Or you're just ashamed to let your classmates know that we're acquaintances?"

"No!" I exclaimed. "Of course notâ€| I said, averting my eyes.

"Hmâ€|if you say so."

"I'm just not used to attention. That's all."

"Hmâ€|if you say so."

"Soâ€|what exactly did you say to Keisuke?"

"Hmâ€|if you say so."

"Oi!"

He was not on his seat, his headphones stuff over his ears. He probably wasn't even listening to me.

"Tsukishima!"

He clicked his tongue in annoyance and hissed.

"What does it matter to you?"

"It does matter! Keisuke's my friend!"

Bam.

He was now glaring at me. I would be lying if I said that I didn't feel fear take over me. The way he glared at me was different. It was as if I had touched a nerve. His fists were clenched over the book he had just slammed.

"Are you really that _stupid_?"

I blinked. He had just insulted me.

"I am not!"

"Yes you are. Someone who defends a person who had just mocked him is called 'stupid'. Any sane person with a sane vocabulary will know that."

"This has nothing to do with you!"

"Says the one who got himself involved with me."

"I—" I opened my mouth, ready to hurdle the best argument that would make this mighty character take back his words.

"I—"

I closed my mouth. He was right.

"Sorry—" I mumbled.

"Whatever, I'm not really mad. Just annoyed."

I hung my head low.

"I couldn't confront him."

"Why not?"

"Because he's my friend."

He rolled his eyes and stared at me with piercing eyes once again.

"Times like this I'm glad I didn't choose to associate myself with the likes of you."

"Uh—but you did accept the books that I lent you. Isn't that some sort of association?"

Tsukki's eyebrow twitched.

"Is it really that hard to tell a friend that he's being a douche?"

"It is."

"Hmâ€|"

"Have you even had any friends, Tsukki?"

"Nope. I don't need them. They're just a bother. I don't wanna be obligated to help them when they go into trouble."

I squinted my eyes.

"What?"

"Nothing." _But aren't youâ€|practically helping meâ€|_

I heaved a deep sigh.

"For now, justâ€|better stay away. And yes, Keisuke can be a prick."

"Yet you chose to bear with it."

"Peace and mediocrity! Those are my two virtues!"

"Ughâ€|" He rolled his eyes once again as he opened the book he slammed a while ago.

"And you really should stop your habit of slamming books when you get mad. Or annoyed."

"Indeed. As well as your habit of dropping your handkerchief every time you leave," he said, waving a piece of white cloth before me.

I felt the blood rush to my face.

"I-!"

He smirked.

"Ah~ by any chance, are you dropping them to get a chance to see me, _Tadashi_?" Upon the mention of my name, his cold voice had dropped into a dangerous one, sending shivers down my spine.

This guy!

"Ha-ahahahahahaha! So you can jest too, Tsukki!" I said, letting out the most convincing laugh I could muster. "C-Can I have my handkerchief now?"

"By all means yes. I want to keep my hands clean."

"Oi!" I snapped, grabbing the cloth as fast I could from his hands.

And then he caught my wrist. I felt my heart skip a beat as soon as I felt his fingers wrap themselves around them. It was then that I realized just how long they were, they enclosed around my wrist without leaving a space.

And they feel cold.

"Your wounds. They look worse than yesterday."

His words brought me back to reality. I jerked my hand away from his grasp.

"Iâ€"I was practicing."

"Hmâ€"|"

"It doesn't concern you."

"Who says I'm concerned about it? Toss and receive that ball all you want I wouldn't even care."

I bit my lips. The way he's speaking, it felt no different than how Keisuke mocked me.

"I'm leaving."

He did not even look at me. Instead, he had opened another book and adjusted the volume of his phone.

I was about to turn my back when he spoke.

"Make sure you don't drop your handkerchief, _Tadashi_."

I gave him a glare and made my exit as fast as I could.

Still, I could not help it. As much as my mind wanted to forget that sensation, it seemed like my skin doesn't.

The touch of those fingers.

It still lingers.

* * *

><p>Before I knew it, the clock had struck six. I had no choice but to leave the gym since my teammates have made their exit already. Thankfully, my captain allowed me to stay a little bit longer.<p>

I bade my apologies to the utility man, who nevertheless patted me on the back. With a sigh, I made my exit and made my way towards the empty plot nearby the gym. It was a pretty ideal place because of its seclusion. Not that I couldn't exactly practice with the team around, but still, it made me extremely conscious of myself. The way the regulars toss and receive was just too awesome in my eyes, it was hard not to gape at them and lose focus for a moment. Even the so-called hope of our teamâ€"the freshman duoâ€"were way beyond promising. One of them was a setter who could toss the ball and maneuver the tempo of the game with such accuracy, with the other oneâ€"an energetic boy who liked to call himself as the 'little giant'â€"receiving those insane tosses like it was nothing. It was no

surprise that they immediately chosen as regulars.

While all these things make me really happy for the team, it also made me feel "well"

Jealous.

I know. I was no genius player, and I couldn't do any insane tosses, nor can I execute a crazy reflex. Still, I loved the sport with all my heart. It's the only thing that I would be willingly able to immerse myself without really asking for anything in return.

Except of course, to be able to help my team win, and once, make me feel that in this respect, I wasn't that lame person by the name of Yamaguchi Tadashi.

I looked at my hands once again. He was right. My bruises. They've gone worse.

But I didn't really care. No. Not at all.

Even if it means practising till I could hardly lift my arms, I would practice until I get to be a better player.

I stopped on my tracks as soon as I got to the place. Leaving my things aside, I tossed the ball, reaching my hands out to receive them and toss them again.

Toss. Miss. Receive. Toss. Receive. Miss. Miss. Miss. Toss. Receive.

Miss. Miss. Miss. Miss. Miss.

The pattern went out for an hour.

"Damn!" I cursed out in frustration as I made another miss. This is no good. If this keeps up, there's no chance of me becoming a regular. There's no way I would be able to keep up with them.

The clock struck seven.

Toss. Receive. Toss. Receive. Toss. Toss. Miss. Miss. Miss.

I cringed my teeth as I took the impact, withstanding the growing heat in my hands, receiving the force of the rubber texture against my skin. I could feel my hands becoming numb.

But this would be no good.

Until I master it, I won't stop.

As soon as I tossed the ball for god knows for the nth time, I felt something trickle down my skin. It came from the sky.

And then it began to pour.

The rain fell down like mad, as if the ground itself was thirsty for it.

Toss. Receive. Miss. Miss. Toss. Toss

Crash. There I went. I seem to have stepped on some random objectâ€”a stone from the way it felt against my shoes. I almost slipped face flat on the puddle of mud had it not been for my hands. I knelt there, my clothes entirely soaked, dirt smudged over my knees and my hands.

I cringed my teeth once again.

The scene flashed like a film before me.

The names being called.

And mine wasn't.

They took a step forward.

And I didn't.

They got chosen.

But I didn't.

They can play for the team.

And I can't.

Keisuke was right. I was really weak.

Before I knew it, I was crying my eyes out.

"_Pathetic."_

Ah. It sounds cold. Just like the rain that had got me soaking wet.

Huh? That's weird. I don't feel it pouring on me anymore. Did the rain stop? No. But I could still hear it.

When I looked up, the first thing that I saw was an umbrella.

The next thing that I saw was a human.

With eyes that felt like ice that pierce through your heart, a stare that could make you cower in fear.

'Stand up, lame guy.'

It was Tsukishima.

My eyes widened. No way.

"It's me. I'm not a ghost, idiot."

"Tsukki?" I said in a hoarse voice.

"Crying under the rain? Truly, the very image of pathetic," he said with a smirk. "Now go stand and get a change of clothes. Is your home far away from here?"

"Eh?"

"Please, I don't have the time in the world. By this time, I should've been at home, resting on my comfortable bed and listening to some song."

"What are youâ€"ouch!"

The tall lad just flicked his fingers on my forehead.

"Just go home for now. You really think catching a cold will help you become a regular?"

I was just lost for words.

"So is your home far from here?"

I shook my head.

"Good. Oh and yeah, meet me here tomorrow. Lunch."

"H-Huh?"

"Do I need to spell it out for you?"

Ehâ€|what is he even saying. I don't get it. What he's sayingâ€|this situation.

I don't get it at all.

"What I'm saying is I'm tossing to you tomorrow. You really look like a fool tossing and receiving the ball at the same time."

"T-Tsukkiâ€"" I croaked.

He glared at me, but nevertheless, he held out the umbrella higher.

"Grab your stuff. I'm walking you home."

This guy.

I don't get him at all.

And then it hit me again. The sensation of his cold fingers.

End
file.